

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING
THE ACTIVATION, ORGANIZATION AND TRAINING
of the 2d RANGER BATTALION - BOLIVIAN ARMY

PREFACE: Based on an exchange of notes signed at La Paz (Annex A) * April 26, 1962. The Government of the United States of America agreed to make available to the Government of Bolivia defense articles and defense services for internal security, subject to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Recognizing a possible threat to the internal security of the Republic of Bolivia in the Oriente, specifically the 3d, 4th, 5th, and 8th Division areas of responsibility, it is agreed that a rapid reaction force of battalion size capable of executing counterinsurgency operations in jungle and difficult terrain throughout this region will be created in the vicinity of Santa Cruz, Republic of Bolivia.

1. Terms of Cooperation.

a. The Bolivian Armed Forces agree to provide a cuartel whose environs include, as a minimum, suitable training areas and facilities for maneuvering of tactical units and the combat firing of all organic weapons; additionally, buildings and shelter will be provided to insure adequate storage, protection, and maintenance of MAP supplied equipment.

b. The Bolivian Armed Forces agree to assign personnel to this unit in the numbers and talents indicated at Annex B. The re-assignment of personnel from or within this unit will be minimal, and their period of service will be not less than two years.

c. The Bolivian Armed Forces agree to furnish initial sufficient quantities of training ammunition to this unit out of its on-hand stocks of MAP and non-MAP ammunition.

d. The Bolivian Armed Forces agree to maintain all U.S. supplied equipment at the highest degree of combat readiness. This includes technical maintenance as well as such "soft goods" as tires, batteries, lubricants, cleaning and preserving materials in reasonable and adequate quantities. Verification that these standards are met will be accomplished within the terms of Paragraph 6 "Exchange of notes" (Annex A) for recurring inspections made jointly by U.S.-Bolivian army representatives. Additionally equipment status reports will be rendered by the unit commander to U.S. Army Section/MILGP through 4th Dept. Bolivian Army on a bi-monthly basis.

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e. For purposes of identification, the U.S. Army section-MILGP recognizes this unit as The Second Ranger Battalion. This in no way precludes the Bolivian Army from designating this unit by any historical or traditional name that it might desire.

f. The U.S. Army Section-MILGP agrees to equip this unit as rapidly as possible in accordance with the equipment list shown at Annex D. This equipment to be provided within the terms of "Exchange of Notes" 22 April 1962. (sic) (Annex A)

g. The U.S. Army Section-MILGP agrees to support the maintenance of U.S.-provided equipment with reasonable quantities of spare and replacement parts, through established logistical channels of the Bolivian Army. It is recognized that the duration of this support will be in accordance with any future modifications of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

h. The U.S. Army Section-MILGP agrees to provide advisor effort on a continuing basis in both technical and operational areas within its capabilities. Additionally, it will receive requests for special training assistance not locally available.

i. The U.S. Army Section-MILGP will initiate actions, e.g., as soon as an adequate site has been established and personnel have been provided.

2. Recognizing a request from the Armed Forces of Bolivia for special training assistance during the initial organization and training phase of this unit, there will be provided a training team of U.S. Specialists from the 8th Special Forces, U.S. Army Forces, Panama, C.Z., within the following conditions:

a. The team shall consist of specialists, ranger-qualified, and combat experienced.

b. The team will consist of 16 officers and noncommissioned officers, commanded by an officer not less than the grade of Major. (Team strength to be modified as needed.)

c. The mission of this team shall be to produce a rapid reaction force capable of counterinsurgency operations and skilled to the degree that four months of intensive training can be absorbed by the personnel presented by the Bolivian Armed Forces.

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d. The program of training to be presented will be as shown at Annex E.

e. The members of this team will enjoy the same responsibilities, rights, and privileges as afforded other U.S. Army Mission members in Bolivia.

f. The members of this team will not exercise command authority over any member of the Bolivian Armed Forces. However, it is expected that in any training situation, their instructions will be accepted and followed in a spirit of understanding and mutual cooperation. Any misunderstanding arising from these training situations which cannot be resolved by the unit commander and the team chief will be referred to Chief USARSEC and the Army Commander.

g. All members of this Special Training Team are specifically prohibited from participating in actual combat operations either as observers or advisors with members of the Bolivian Armed Forces.

h. All members of this Special Training Team are under the operational control of Chief USARSEC. Any incidents requiring disciplinary action will be referred to Chief USARSEC for necessary action.

3. Wilful disregard, in whole or in part, of these generally stated agreements by either party will in fact nullify this memorandum of understanding.

KENNETH T. MACEK
Colonel, GS
Chief USARSEC/MILGP

DAVID LAFUENTE
Commander
Bolivian Army

ALFREDO OVANDO C
General
Commander, Armed Forces

* Annexes not provided

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15. SUMMARY:

1. U ~~Sec~~ Report forwards results of debriefing of Officers of the 2nd Ranger Battalion concerning the Battalion's activities from 26 September to 14 October 67.

2. U ~~Sec~~ Report includes details concerning the capture and execution of Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

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to have stayed at a house in Charnol for a few days. The intelligence team returned to the house, and after a thorough search, discovered a carbine and several hundred rounds of ammunition. As Charnol is one of the only fording sites for the Rio Grande in the area, it appeared that the guerrilla force had been planning to move through this area and exfiltrate. However, the arrival of the Battalion in this region, plus the additional support of Company Manchego and one Company of CITE at Charnol, probably caused the guerrilla force to move to higher ground in the La Higuera area.

On 2 October, 1st Platoon, 3rd Platoon, and one mortar section of Company B departed and moved along the Rio Grande towards El Fuente. At O-Campo the 3rd Platoon crossed to the south bank of the river and the group proceeded to El Fuente with 1st Platoon and the mortar section on the north bank and 3rd Platoon on the south. At El Fuente the company joined with another company of CITE and the company Florida. The Florida company was made up of pure collos (Indians of the alto-plano) that were supposed to be some of the best troops for rough mountainous terrain.

On 2 October the remaining elements that made up Company B gathered at El Fuente. That afternoon the 1st Platoon, under the command of Lt Venigas, returned to Quinal to cover the San Antonio ravine. Since Company A had been dispatched to Pucara, the battalion now had a coverage from Pucara, through Quinal and Charnol to El Fuente.

On 3 October, Captain Prado received the order to proceed to Estanque. After departing, they received another order that scheduled them to arrive at Pucara on the 5th. When the company arrived at Estanque they received intelligence that there was guerrilla activity around the town of Pugio. The company immediately moved to Pugio but learned that the guerrillas had moved again towards La Higuera. To screen the area, Cpt Prado broke the company into two elements; sending 1 platoon towards Tranco Mayo and the other elements towards the town of Abra del Picacho. The two units maintained constant radio contact during this period.

On 4 October, the two elements rejoined at Picacho and rested for the entire day. The next morning, 5 October, Cpt Prado received an order to remain in place until they received further instructions from Major Ayorea at Valle Grande. During this time, Prado initiated vigorous patrolling toward La Higuera and Tranco Mayo. The company now also had contact with Company A that had been operating from Valle Grande towards Picacho. The patrolling continued through the 6th and 7th of October.

On 8 October, 2LT Perez of Company A received information that there was a band of 17 guerrillas in the Churro Ravine. As Perez did not have mortars, he communicated to Cpt Prado the information and ask for support. Cpt Prado sent the 3rd Platoon and 2 mortars to Higuera to support Lt Perez. Cpt Prado accompanied the unit and commanded the mortar section.

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The combined units of Company A and the supporting units from Company B moved into the area of the Churro Ravine using two squads of Company A as a blocking force a few kms north of the small Caino Ravine. Cpt Prado set up his mortar section east of the Churro Ravine, with 3rd Platoon of Company B to his rear in support, under the command of Sgt Huauca. 1st Platoon of Company A under the command of Lt Perez entered the Churro Ravine to the north at the confluence of two small streams. Lt Perez initiated the pursuit and began driving the guerrilla force south while Cpt Prado's mortars shelled the ravine. At this point a machine gun was brought up to also cover the ravine and hold the left flank of Prado's mortar section and supporting troops. As the 1st Platoon of Company A pushed south they came under fire and lost 3 soldiers immediately. Cpt Prado then ordered Sgt Huauca to move down the small Tuscal Ravine and wait at the entrance of the Churro Ravine. The 3rd Platoon of Company B carried out this order and after finding nothing, was ordered to enter the Churro Ravine and begin pursuit in the direction of Lt Perez's platoon. Sgt Huauca immediately encountered a group of 6 to 8 guerrillas and opened fire. At this point they killed "Antonio" and "Orturo", two Cubans. Sgt Huauca lost one soldier here and another was wounded. "Ramon" (Guevara) and "Willy" tried to break out in the direction of the mortar section. They were sighted by the machine gun crew which took them under fire. "Ramon" (Guevara) was hit in the lower calf and was helped by "Willy" toward the Tuscal Ravine where apparently they rested for a few minutes. They then moved north, directly in front of Cpt Prado who ordered several soldiers to chase them. Soldiers Encinos, Choque, and Balboa were the first Bolivians to lay hands on Guevara. "Willy" and "Ramon" (Guevara) were later transported back to La Higuera with Cpt Prado and the elements of Companies A and B. The Bolivians did not remain in position after nightfall. From 1900 hrs until 0400 hrs on the 9th, there were no significant Bolivian troops in the area of the fire fight. This gave the guerrilla force ample time to escape the area, but either due to confusion after the battle or poor evaluation of the situation by their leaders, the guerrilla force remained in the Churro Ravine.

On 30 October 67, at a small pavilion in La Esperanza, Bolivia, Lt Ral Espinoza Lord, Company B, 2nd Ranger Bn, stated the following in regards to the handling of Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Guevara and "Willy" were transported back to La Higuera on the afternoon of the 8th, after the battle at the Churro Ravine. Guevara had a slight wound in the lower calf, which was treated upon returning to La Higuera. Lt Espinoza talked at length with Guevara, though Guevara did not reveal any pertinent information. Espinoza felt a high regard for Guevara as a soldier and a man, and was anxious to know more of this "legendary figure". Guevara answered all of his questions with remarks such as "perhaps" or "possibly". Early in the morning of the 9th of October, the unit received the order to execute Guevara and the other captives. Previously, Col Santana, Commander of the 8th Division, had given express orders to keep the prisoners alive. The Officers involved did not know where the order originated, but felt that it came from the highest echelons. Cpt Prado gave the order to execute Guevara to Lt Perez, but he was unable to carry out the order and in turn gave it to Sgt Terran, Company B. At this time Perez asked Guevara if there

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was anything he wished before his execution. Guevara replied that he only wished to "die with a full stomach". Perez then asked him if he was a "materialist"; by having requested only food. Guevara returned to his previous tranquil manner and answered only "perhaps". Perez then called him a "poor shit" and left the room. By this time, Sgt Terran had fortified his courage with several beers and returned to the room where Guevara was being held prisoner. When Terran entered the room, Guevara stood up, hands tied in front, and stated, "I know what you have come for I am ready". Terran looked at him for a few minutes and then said, "No you are mistaken be seated." Sgt Terran then left the room for a few moments.

"Willy", the prisoner taken with Guevara, was being held in a small house a few meters away. While Terran was waiting outside to get his nerve back, Sgt Huacka entered and shot "Willy." "Willy" was a Cuban and according to the sources had been an instigator of the riots among the miners in Bolivia. Guevara heard the burst of fire in his room and for the first time appeared to be frightened. Sgt Terran returned to the room where Guevara was being held. When he entered, Guevara stood and faced him. Sgt Terran told Guevara to be seated but he refused to sit down and stated, "I will remain standing for this." The Sgt began to get angry and told him to be seated again, but Guevara would say nothing. Finally Guevara told him, "Know this now, you are killing a man." Terran then fired a burst from his M2 Carbine, knocking Guevara back into the wall of the small house.

Interviews with a doctor that had examined Guevara's cadaver and evaluation of available photos indicate that Guevara did have one wound in the lower calf, that appeared to the doctor to have been received at a different time than the other wounds that were received at short range and directly from the front.

During the evening of the 8th and the morning of the 9th, Lt Espinoza had on his person a pipe that he said Guevara had given him during their night together at La Higuera. He showed this pipe to sources at the pavilion in La Esperanza and again at the 8th Division Headquarters in Santa Cruz on the morning of the 31st. The pipe was of an "Air Cooling design" with a part of the stem exposed and made of silver colored metal. The bowl was black and appeared to have been smoked for some time. This pipe form agrees with the descriptions of the pipe "Ramon" had been using during earlier developments of the guerrilla operations.

At 0400 hours on the morning of the 9th, elements of A and B Company returned to the Churro Ravine and reengaged the guerrilla force. 2nd Platoon of Company B and a mortar squad formed the blocking force at the confluence of the ravine and 3rd and 5th Platoon of A Company began pursuit towards them. Lt Espinoza was with the mortars at this time and could observe the movement of the guerrillas in the ravine. He took 6 men and entered the ravine and shot "El Chino" and Lorgio Voca. These were the

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only two guerrillas who fell in this action. After the initial contact, the guerrillas could not be located so Cpt Prado initiated patrols throughout the area. At nightfall the units again returned to La Higuera, leaving the area open.

The two companies patrolled the area from 10-12 October trying to regain contact. On the 12th, intelligence was received that the guerrilla force had broken into two small groups trying to move out of the area through Portero. Company B departed La Higuera and headed in the direction of Portero, by Pacacho and Tranco Mayo. At Tranco Mayo they could observe the guerrillas with two young guides moving toward Portero. They could not determine exactly how many were in the group. To arrive ahead of the guerrillas who were moving along a ravine, the company used the road and were able to get into position at Portero twenty minutes before they sighted the guerrillas moving up the ravine in their direction. Lt Espinoza with a squad and one mortar formed a blocking force at the mouth of the ravine. 1st Platoon of B Company entered the ravine behind the guerrillas and initiated pursuit. When Espinoza and his men opened fire on the guerrillas they began to leap about. This confused Espinoza's soldiers though they continued to fire. The guerrillas doubled back and climbed out of the ravine before the 1st Platoon could bring them under fire. 1st Platoon pursued them up the hill but lost contact at the top.

No casualties were suffered in this engagement and no guerrillas fell, though they did drop their rucksacks when brought under fire by Lt Espinoza. The rucksacks contained food, various documents, and drugs. Surgical tools were also among the equipment in the rucksacks. Lt Espinoza was unable to describe the documents or the origin of the medical supplies.

On 13 October the company attempted to block the guerrillas again east of Portero but the guerrillas immediately attacked one point of the circle and were able to break out killing 2 soldiers. By noon of the 13th the company had lost contact completely with the guerrilla force.

The second group was contacted by C Company on 14 October at El Cajon. This fight resulting in the death of 4 guerrillas. El Chapaco, a Bolivian, El Saldado, A Bolivian, an unnamed Bolivian, and one unnamed Cuban. This fight on the 14th was the last contact made by the ranger battalion before leaving the area of operations. None of the interviewed Officers had details on this fight or could draw a map as to the exact location of El Cajon.

The original guerrilla force was 17. 7 were killed in action by companies A and B and 4 were destroyed by C Company at El Cajon. Recent reports indicate that the Cubans have disarmed the Bolivian guerrillas and seem to have them under guard. Apparently there is some sort of disagreement in the operation within the guerrilla organization. One farmer informed the authorities that the guerrillas ate at his farm and rested. During this time, the Bolivians were kept separate from the Cubans and were watched closely by the Cubans. The Bolivians had no arms. All of the guerrillas are shaved and have their hair cut. Officials believe that they are trying to move out of the area through Abapo or Cabezas.

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